

Office of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Community Review WINTER 2009
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Airline Service Complaints

By Steve Peck, TRS Program Manager

The Winter 2008 edition of the ODDH Community Review newsletter featured an article about communication access at SeaTac Airport. The article explained the procedure for the public to make comments and suggestions for improving communication options. Since June 2008, ODDH has been working with the Port of Seattle Customer Service department to encourage communication access and the implementation of visual announcement systems at the airport. It is our goal to ensure that Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened, and Deaf-Blind people are able to use various assistive tools when traveling or visiting the airport.

Joining efforts/working in partnership with ODDH are: Jelica Nuccio, Executive Director of the Deaf-Blind Service Center (DBSC), Penny Allen, representing Hearing Loss Association of Washington (HLA-WA), Ariele Belo, Director of Deaf Services at the Hearing, Speech & Deafness Center (HSDC), and Rob Roth from the University of Washington (UW).

In our initial meeting with Port of Seattle Customer Service management, our team discussed communication access and other traveler-related issues experienced at the airport by people with hearing and vision loss. To ensure equal access and to enhance convenience of travel, we made recommendations to the department, including the availability of:

- Braille maps,
- Visual announcement systems with closed captioning for airport and flight announcements,
- And possibilities of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services.

In addition to our list of recommendations, we concluded that it would be appropriate to establish an airport advisory committee. An advisory committee helps to assist airport management in the implementation of assistive technology for the disability groups we

represent. We hope that in good faith, the airport will modify and enhance communication services at the airport during 2009. It is up to the community members, though, to also self-advocate for services so that your travel experiences will be less stressful and convenient.

Help to improve communication access at SeaTac Airport!

Have you or someone you know experienced difficulties traveling or picking-up someone from the airport because of your hearing loss or disability?

If so, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is here to listen to your story. DOT is the federal agency responsible for airline comments, suggestions, or service complaints. Below is the information you will need to appropriately file comments or complaints about communication access at SeaTac Airport.

Complaints about airline service may be registered with DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division (ACPD). You can call, write, or use the DOT web form.

CALL

Aviation Consumer Protection Division (ACPD)

Leave a message any time.

Calls are returned Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. EST.

(202) 366-2220 V

(202) 366-0511 TTY

SEND A LETTER

Aviation Consumer Protection Division, C-75

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.

Washington, D.C. 20590

If you send APCD a letter, you should also include a copy (not the original) of your airline ticket or itinerary sheet and any correspondence you have already exchanged with the company.

USE DOT WEB FORM

Use the electronic DOT web form to send a complaint, comment, or inquiry to ACPD. The web form captures information more accurately and processes it more efficiently.

Web: <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/escomplaint/es.cfm>

Whether you call, write, or use the web form, please be brief and concise in the description of your problem and suggestions. Be sure to include the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Daytime phone number (including area code)
- E-mail address
- Name of airline or company about which you are complaining
- Flight date
- Flight number if known
- Origin and destination cities of your trip

All comments and complaints are entered into DOT's computerized aviation industry monitoring system. Comments are logged and charged to the company in question in the monthly Air Travel Consumer Report. This report is distributed to the industry and made available to the news media and the general public so that consumers and air travel companies can compare the records of individual airlines and tour operators. Complaints are reviewed to determine the extent to which carriers are in compliance with federal aviation consumer protection regulations. This system also serves as a basis for rulemaking, legislation, and research. Where appropriate, letters and web form submissions will be forwarded to an airline official at the company for further consideration.

Disability and Discrimination Complaints

If your complaint concerns accessibility problems experienced by a passenger with a disability, or alleged discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion or ancestry, you are encouraged to go to the following website for information on where to file your complaint.

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/DiscrimComplaintsContacts.htm>

For additional information:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/DiscComplInstr.htm>

If you are filing an accessibility or discrimination complaint with DOT, they have complaint forms for these two types of complaints that you can download and/or print if you wish. Complaints of this type may be filed on the appropriate form, or by letter or e-mail.

Web link to form for filing a complaint about disability problems:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/forms/382form.pdf>

Web link to form for filing a complaint about general discrimination:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/forms/disform.pdf>

For additional information regarding filing a complaint about accessibility problems with an airline that were experienced by a passenger with a disability, go to:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/ACAAComplaint.htm>

The DOT produces an annual Report to Congress summarizing complaints that air carriers receive about disability-related issues. You can view this report, at the website:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/gateway1.htm>

Web link to Department of Transportation (DOT):

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/>

DSHS Recognizes ODHH Staff Members' Years of Faithful Service with the State of Washington

Lien Ngo-Tran, Fiscal Officer	25 Years
Colleen Rozmaryn, Program Manager ACT	20 Years
Robert Lichtenberg, Assistant Director	10 Years

New VideoPhone Number

Effective immediately, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a new videophone number.

The Videophone number is

(360) 339-7382

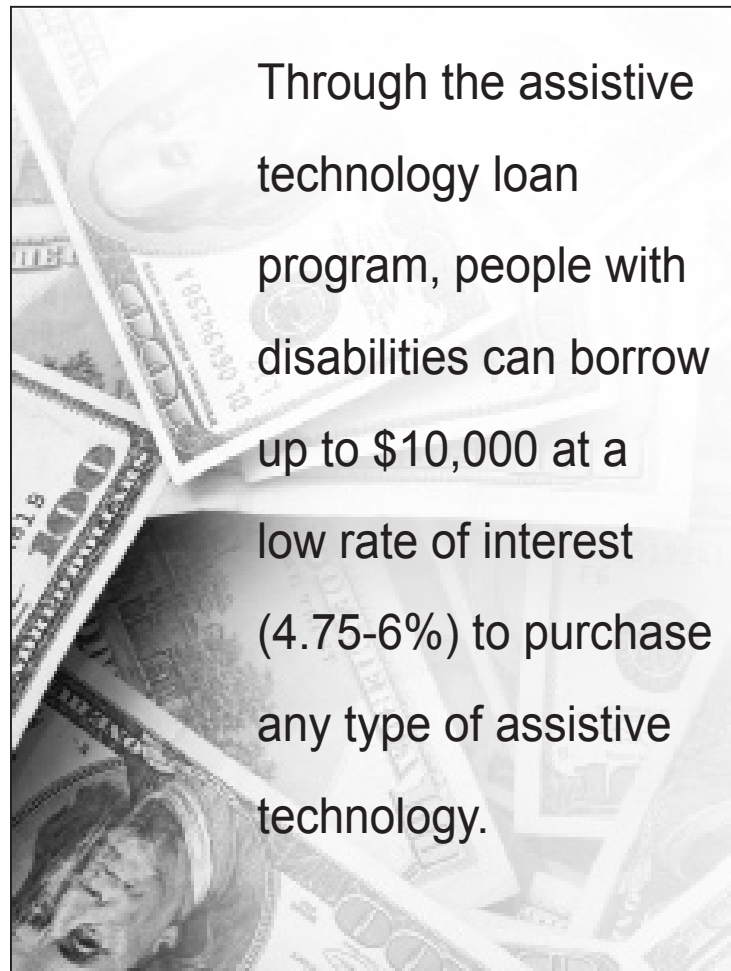
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Washington Assistive Technology Foundation **Promotes access to technology and economic opportunities for people with disabilities**

—By Kevin Meirose

When Deanna Vega, a special education teacher in the Lake Washington School System, faced the dilemma of replacing her hearing aids in the summer of 2008, she panicked. The hearing aids were essential to her job but not covered by medical insurance or DVR services. With a \$5000 price tag, Deanna wasn't sure how she was going to pay for them. With the advice of her DVR counselor, she applied and was approved for a low interest loan from the Washington Assistive Technology Foundation (WATF). She says that WATF "... provides a great option for people with hearing loss unable to pay for the cost of hearing aids up front." With her Bachelor and Masters degrees already in hand, Deanna seeks National Board Certification this year— a designation that will help advance both her career and income earning potential.

The Washington Assistive Technology Foundation (“WATF”) serves as an important resource for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals. A statewide nonprofit, WATF promotes access to technology and economic opportunities for people with disabilities by offering low interest loans for assistive technology and business equipment for home based employment and self employment as well as low cost rentals of CCTV magnifiers. Since its inception, WATF has approved over 200 loans with an average loan amount of \$3,500 – lending out nearly \$775,000. About 75 percent of the loans went to low income



Through the assistive technology loan program, people with disabilities can borrow up to \$10,000 at a low rate of interest (4.75-6%) to purchase any type of assistive technology.

households and more than one third to individuals with hearing loss.

Through the assistive technology loan program, people with disabilities can borrow up to \$10,000 at a low rate of interest (4.75-6%) to purchase any type of assistive technology. Assistive technology is broadly defined to include any device that maintains or enhances the capabilities of a person with a disability. WATF’s loans thus can be used to purchase computers, Braille devices, wheelchairs, modified vehicles, and hearing aids to name a

few. The devices can be needed for any purpose: independent living, education, employment, recreation or community participation. WATF works with approved applicants to set up monthly payment plans that fit their budgets.

Hearing aids are among the most commonly purchased items. Families facing the unexpected cost of purchasing hearing aids, which

can range up to \$9,000 for a pair, often do not know where to turn. Private insurance generally excludes hearing aids from coverage or only covers a small fraction of the cost. WATF steps in to help families deal with such funding gaps.

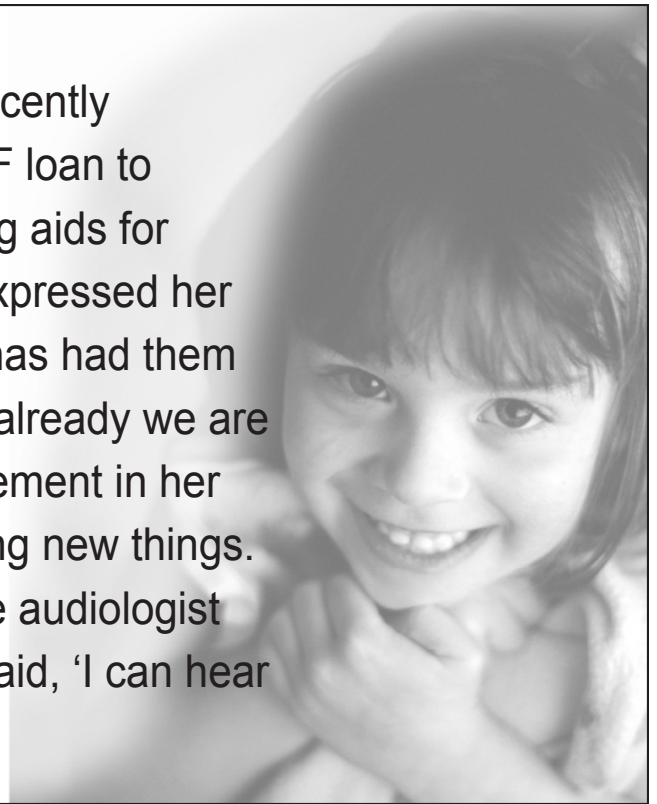
WATF's loans can be used for many other types of technology – co-pays for cochlear implants, for example – in addition to less expensive items such as fire alarms, baby monitors, phones (including cell phones), video-relay systems, door bells and alarm clocks as well as equipment needed for employment or community participation purposes. Last year, for example, WATF approved a loan to a young man with a hearing loss to purchase a set of two-way radios that would allow him to work in the travel industry. A small keyboard that attaches to one of the radios allows him to send text messages to the other radio, hence enabling him to communicate with his colleagues. He used a similar system to volunteer as a tour docent for Amtrak in North Carolina. He has aspirations to work on a cruise ship or tourist boat and to explore new applications for his two-way radios.

WATF also offers loans of up to \$10,000 program to help individuals with disabilities purchase business equipment for home-based employment and self employment (Telework Loans). These loans can be used for any type of business equipment – not just assistive technology. And the home based employment can be part or full time. WATF's Program Director, Kathy Gilman, works with potential applicants to complete an application, prepare a business plan, when needed, and to answer any questions they may have. WATF also offers a small business training class that helps participants learn about planning, budgeting, marketing, and benefits planning. In the summer of 2008, WATF held this series for ASL users at the Hearing, Speech, and Deafness Center in Seattle. These classes were met with great enthusiasm and several people continue to work with us on their business plan.

In addition to loans, WATF offers low cost, long-term rentals of Closed Circuit TV magnifiers. These desk top magnifiers are used by individuals with vision loss to read, write and carry out other activities

of daily living. Black and white units rent for \$25 per month and color units for \$35 per month. This program, originally launched in collaboration with the Department of Services for the Blind and supported with grants from the Schuman Trust and the Boeing

A mother who recently received a WATF loan to purchase hearing aids for her 4-year old expressed her gratitude, "She has had them for a week, and already we are seeing the excitement in her face upon hearing new things. When we left the audiologist last week, she said, 'I can hear my footsteps!'"



Employees Community Fund, was particularly designed to help low income individuals with significant vision loss (including those in the deaf-blind community) access this technology on a long-term basis.

People with questions or an interest in applying for any of these programs can find out more information on WATF's website (<http://www.watf.org>) or by contacting Kevin Meirose, Assistive Technology Program Manager or Kathy Gilman, Program Director and Telework Manager, at the following numbers and email addresses.

Kathy@watf.org OR Kevin@watf.org
(206) 328-5116 (Voice)
1-800-214-8731, Ext.2 (Voice)
1-888-808-8942 (TTY)
1-866-939-9816 (Videophone)

Get Connected!

With Washington Relay

Get—and stay—connected to family, friends and co-workers. It has never been easier with Washington Relay.

Washington Relay is a free service provided by Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to ensure equal communication access to the telephone service for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and speech disabled.

To use Washington Relay, simply dial 711 to connect with an operator. The operator will dial the requested number and relay the conversation between the two callers.

You'll never feel disconnected again!



VOICE	1.800.833.6384
TTY	1.800.833.6388
VCO	1.800.833.6386
STS	1.877.833.6341
HCO	1.800.833.6388
TB	1.800.833.6385

CUSTOMER SERVICE (ENGLISH)
1.800.676.3777

CUSTOMER SERVICE (SPANISH)
1.800.676.4290

www.washingtonrelay.com

CSD Receives \$1.1 Million FCC Grant to Implement Nationwide Awareness Campaign about Transition to DTV

Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD) today announced that it has been awarded a \$1.1 million grant from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) using funds that were appropriated by Congress last year for DTV outreach. The grant will be used to launch a national awareness campaign about the country's transition to digital television (DTV).

On Feb. 17 of this year, America's entire television network infrastructure will transition to a digitally based broadcast signal. Unless a digital converter box is obtained and installed, over-the-air analog viewers will not be able to receive a television signal. Congress has encouraged broadcasters and the FCC to implement massive awareness campaigns to better educate the public about this upcoming change. It is expected that millions of Americans will be contacting information centers for more details. CSD is one of 12 recently identified organizations to help with outreach efforts and technical assistance.

"We are delighted to receive this award from the FCC and are very enthusiastic about developing an educational awareness initiative for citizens all across the nation," stated Benjamin J. Soukup, CSD president and chief executive officer. "We are also pleased that special attention is being given to key population groups--minorities, senior citizens, the disabled, and others--which are otherwise overlooked. Sensitivity to equal access and equal accommodations is something we have staunchly advocated for and the funding of projects like this is most definitely a move in the right direction. We look forward to other future opportunities just like this one to ensure that all citizens--including those who may be deaf or hard of hearing--have equal access to information and communication when important announcements like this one must be made."

CSD will immediately create and release deaf oriented PSAs, disseminate educational materials, conduct seminars, answer calls from an established call center, help viewers get and install DTV-to-analog converter boxes, educate consumers about the use of DTV closed captioning services, provide technical assistance, and more. Within weeks, deaf and hard of hearing consumers will be able to contact CSD's Help Center via regular voice phone service or by using videophones, the Web, IM Chat, Relay Services, IP Relay, Voice Carry Over, Captioned Telephone (Cap-Tel), Video Relay Services and Spanish Video Relay Services to make inquiries.

The duration of this project is expected to last throughout the next six months and CSD hopes to aggressively work with several other national groups and organizations such as the Hearing Loss Association of America, the National Association of the Deaf, Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc., Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association, and many, many others to reach America's 28 million deaf and hard of hearing people. For more information and updates in the weeks ahead, please be sure to visit the CSD Web site at www.c-s-d.org.

About CSD — CSD (a.k.a. Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc.) was established in 1975, primarily to provide sign language interpreting services to deaf and hard of hearing adults in South Dakota. Today, CSD employs over 1,500 individuals in offices across the nation, providing a broad continuum of social and human services programs, as well as telecommunications relay services. CSD is a private non-profit agency dedicated to providing quality services; ensuring public accessibility; and increasing awareness of issues affecting the deaf, hard of hearing and individuals with speech disabilities. For more information, please visit www.c-s-d.org.

The next time you need to know about the status of a flight at SeaTac Airport, just turn to your cell phone or pager

SeaTac customers can now receive real-time flight information directly on their cell phones and pagers. This service uses a simple text message request that sends updated flight information back to the cell phone or pager via text message. It is compatible with most cell phones and pagers.

Users get up-to-date flight information, including current departure or arrival times, gate numbers, and additional flight status updates.

Here's how it works:

- Text "FlySEA" (359732)
- Text the name of your airline and flight number.
For example: Northwest 1234

Within seconds, you'll receive a text message with information about your flight.

Cell phone and pager updates are a one-time, passenger activated service. In order to receive another update you must text "FlySEA" again. Your cell phone or pager carrier's standard rates apply, so please check with your carrier about your service plan.

E-mail Flight Notification

<http://hosting.portseattle.org/fids/>

Select the Email Notification tab, enter your airline, flight number, date of flight, and email address and receive flight notifications including updates as gates or times change.

Special Announcement

On February 9, 2009, Governor Christine Gregoire issued an Executive Order 09-02 “Rescission of Executive Orders and Eliminations of Certain Boards and Commissions” to reform how state government do business. ODHH regrets to inform you that the ODHH Advisory Committee has been identified as one of many Boards and Commissions eliminated.

ODHH wants to thank current and past advisory committee members for their contributions. ODHH values your feedback on how we can improve our services to the deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech-disabled communities. To show our commitment to you, we will plan town hall meetings in the future. More information about the town hall meetings will be announced on ODHH website, in newsletters and through email distributions.

More information about the Executive Order can be found at www.governor.wa.gov/execorders/eo_09-02.pdf

Office of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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(360) 902-8000 V/TTY

Website: <http://odhh.dshs.wa.gov>

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Free Matter
for the Blind
and Physically
Handicapped